

## SENIORS COALITION

*“Indeed, no industry will have more chits to call in than the pharmaceutical business.”*

— [Washington Post, 11/8/02]

*“The pharmaceuticals were on a plane all by themselves”*

— Health care lobbyist commenting on the success of drug company efforts on behalf of GOP candidates.

[Washington Post, 11/8/02]

### **Seniors Coalition Founded by Well-Known Conservative; Favors Social Security Privatization, Tax Cuts for the Wealthy, Attacking Daschle**

**Seniors Coalition an Extreme Right Wing Group.** Although the group calls itself “the responsible alternative to the AARP,” the Seniors Coalition is a far right group that advocates Social Security privatization and tax cuts for the ultra-wealthy. Seniors Coalition policy analyst Christine Hall described the group as an “advocacy organization for conservative senior citizens.” [Seniors Coalition Press Conference, 6/17/98]

- **Seniors Coalition Founded by Viguerie, “Progenitor of the Modern Conservative Movement.”** The Seniors Coalition was founded in 1989 with the help of conservative direct-mail fundraiser Richard Viguerie. The alleged purpose of the group was to lobby Congress on behalf of seniors. However, the Seniors Coalition didn’t have a registered lobbyist until May 10, 1990 and didn’t register as a lobbying organization until July 14, 1992 – some three years after the organization’s founding. Richard Viguerie also founded the conservative 60 Plus Association. The Washington Times described Viguerie as “a progenitor of the modern conservative movement.” [Washington Post, 10/22/89; Preliminary Report Pursuant to Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act, Jake Hansen for the Seniors Coalition, I.D. number 14826000, filed 5/10/90; Preliminary Report Pursuant to Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act, the Seniors Coalition, I.D. number 16917000, filed 7/14/92; Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 10/31/95; New York Times, 11/12/92; Washington Times, 9/11/00]
- **Seniors Coalition Advocated Social Security Privatization.** The Seniors Coalition argued for privatization of Social Security. In an issue brief to members, the Coalition wrote, “Given that seniors and other demographic groups support (albeit at varying degrees) some form of privatization of Social Security, it is time to move forward with sensible reform proposals....Congress and the Administration must act now to implement some measure of privatization that gives workers the choice to invest a portion of their payroll taxes in a balanced portfolio of stock and bonds, and thereby transition Social Security to a self-funding, investment-based system.” [Seniors Coalition Issue Brief: “Social Security Reform”]
- **Seniors Coalition Proposed Big Tax Cuts For Wealthy.** While claiming to support the solvency of Social Security, the Seniors Coalition advocated tax cuts that would hurt the trust fund and overwhelmingly favor the ultra-wealthy. The Coalition argued for abolition of both the capital gains tax and estate tax. In addition, the Coalition argued in favor of an across the board tax cut. [Seniors Coalition Issue Brief: “Enact Across-the-Board Tax Relief”]
- **Seniors Coalition Attacked Daschle.** In a year when he was not up for reelection, the Seniors Coalition ran a radio ad attacking then-Senator Majority Tom Daschle (D-SD). The group specifically attacked Daschle for opposing Social Security privatization. The Seniors Coalition

wrote, “Worse, they [politicians] play word games with so-called ‘privatization’ plans. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle likes to demagogue this issue...” [[The Washington Times](#), 1/24/02; [U.S. Newswire](#), 9/17/02]

## **Seniors Coalition Tied to Pharmaceutical Industry**

**Seniors Coalition is Member of Citizens for Better Medicare – Group Funded by Pharmaceutical Industry.** Citizens for Better Medicare (CBM) is a group representing the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) and other business leaders, including the Seniors Coalition, United Seniors Association, the United States Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers that advocate for Medicare reform. Since 1999, they have run repeated ad campaigns opposing Democratic efforts to enact a Medicare prescription drug benefit. [Citizens for Better Medicare, <http://www.bettermedicare.org/who/>; [New York Times](#), 7/29/99]

- **CBM Ads Funded by PhRMA, Biggest Members Foreign Pharmaceutical Companies.** The executive director of Citizens for Better Medicare, Timothy C. Ryan, stated that the majority of the group’s money comes from drug makers. Several of the biggest members of PhRMA are the United States subsidiaries of European pharmaceutical concerns including: Bayer A.G., Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals Inc., Glaxo Wellcome P.L.C., Hoechst Marion Roussel A.G. and Rhone-Poulenc Rorer Inc. [[Gannett News Service](#), 12/9/99; [Washington Post](#), 7/28/99; [New York Times](#), 6/28/00]

## **Seniors Coalition Has History of Misleading Seniors, Focus on Profit**

**House Subcommittee Blasted Seniors Coalition for Misleading Seniors; Profit Motive.** In 1992, the House Ways & Means Committee Social Security Subcommittee blasted the Seniors Coalition for “particularly egregious” mailings to older Americans. The Social Security Administration echoed House committee criticism for misleading seniors and using scare tactics to bolster monetary donations. As the House considered legislation to punish groups for such mailings, then-Representative Jim Bunning (R-KY) said, “The motive of these groups is to raise money.” [[Gannett News Service](#), 6/18/92; [St. Petersburg Times](#), 5/15/92; [New York Times](#), 11/12/92]

- **Viguerie Took Advantage of Seniors Coalition Postal Subsidies for Personal Profit.** In 1992, the [New York Times](#) reported that Viguerie used the Seniors Coalition to take advantage of the large postal subsidies available to tax-exempt groups to send what critics in Congress called “fright mail.” The group, in turn, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to rent the mailing lists that Viguerie’s for-profit company compiled and maintained. Viguerie’s main business is the operation of a direct-mail firm that works for conservative Republican candidates. The [Los Angeles Times](#) described Viguerie as the “godfather of conservative direct mail.” [[New York Times](#), 11/12/92; [Los Angeles Times](#), 10/28/90]
- **Seniors Coalition Rented Donor Lists for Profit in 2000 Elections.** According to an [Associated Press](#) report on groups registered to lobby on behalf of seniors, the Seniors Coalition made \$481,335 from renting their donor lists during 2000. When pressed to disclose the purchasers of their lists, the Seniors Coalition “declined or did not respond to requests.” [[Associated Press](#), 7/25/01]